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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the values of industry and higher education are incompatible and that imposition of industrial values on universities must necessarily destroy traditional academic values. Any dialogue between industry and higher education must grapple with this value conflict. The industrial ethic is based on unlimited growth, exploitation of raw materials, and penetration of more markets with minimal constraints on competition. The current decade has seen an increased awareness of environmental and societal issues with other trends perhaps signaling fundamental change. Although traditional elite university values of disinterested pursuit of knowledge in a collegial community may have little relevance to a post-modern era, traditional higher education values of creating an educated public and enhancing critical awareness to free minds and uphold democracy is still valid. Government intervention in higher education has promoted industrial values. In particular, in the United Kingdom, the Higher and Further Education Act of 1992 resulted in direct intervention in university teaching by setting up "quality assessment" committees under funding councils. This has brought the industrial language of quality control into the university. These trends may overlie deeper interests in political and social control of higher education. (Contains 26 references.) (JB)

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To many the relations between higher education and industry are not problematical: industry needs highly trained employees and it is for the government to see that universities provide them.

The argument of this paper is that interaction between universities and business raises profound questions of ends and means, of values and aspirations. We contend that the industrial ethic, the values of industry and commerce, are determined by the need to make a profit for private gain, whereas the values that are widely supported in universities are associated with open enquiry and intellectual freedom [Halsey 1992]. The two sets of values are incommensurable, so, if industrial values are implanted in universities, they must necessarily destroy the foundation on which academic values depend.

Values

The Enlightenment 'project' was to apply reason, freed from external constraints, to the creation of 'a universal civilisation undergirded by a shared, rational morality' [Gray 1991; v. also MacIntyre 1988, p.6; MacIntyre 1990, p.225] It has never been achieved on a practical level: 'questions of truth in morality....have become matter for private allegiances' [MacIntyre 1990, p. 217, cf. MacIntyre 1988, p.3].

For Alasdair MacIntyre contradictions between moral or value positions are not conflicts between the rational and irrational, but between the rationalities of different traditions [MacIntyre 1988, p.5]. Isaiah Berlin agrrees that value-conflicts cannot be resolved by recourse to higher reason because the values at stake are incommensurable [Gray 1991]. In a liberal society such conflicting values and the choices that have to be made among them should be brought out and not suppressed either by ambiguity of language or by external pressures. In any dialogue between industry and higher education it is essential to grapple with the value conflict that lies at the root of the relationship.

The Industrial Ethic

The limits of social responsibility of an industrial corporation are largely those stated thirty years ago by Milton Friedman: 'to make as much money for their stockholders as possible' [Friedman 1962], The values of industry are associated with unlimited growth, involving the production more goods, the exploitation of more raw materials and the penetration of more markets with minimal constraints on competition. Now in the 1990's such values come with a 'green' overlay.

In the West these values have become hegemonic and accepted as the 'normal' way of doing things. Thus the concept 'industry' was for many years

unproblematic, with the consequence that relatively few people questioned its values and its apparent need for aggressive advertising and continuous growth.

Yet these capitalist values are in no sense immutable or inevitable. They can be recognised historically as a social artefact: representing the coming to fruition of the particular values which underpinned the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th and early 19th century. During other periods of human existence and in other cultures today, these values did not and do not prevail.

New values in industry?

Today, while the overriding rôle of industry is still to maximise growth and profits, there is increasingly an awareness of environmental and societal issues, representing shifts in consciousness which might indicate changing values. The most conspicuous of these is the high profile given to environmental issues in industry, followed perhaps by an increasing emphasis on business ethics. A more potent force for change may be the transition from the Fordist industrial model, typified by large-scale assembly line production, to high technology, small scale workshop production, known as 'post-Fordism'.

The debate about the future of Western capitalism is growing under the pressure of environmental and social problems, and the challenge of the 'Tiger' economies of the Pacific Rim. At the heart of the debate lie incommensurable values: on the one hand, economic growth as the means to the end of acting responsibly to stakeholders, and on the other, limits to growth as the means to the end of achieving ecological and human rights in the world. In a civilised society such a profound disagreement which has significance for the 'good' of individuals and of the world as a whole should be the subject of open and disciplined enquiry. It is our contention that one of the main purposes of institutions of higher education is ideally to provide the forum for such enquiry.

The Values of Universities

Higher education in the U.K. is being rapidly transformed by the ending of the binary divide, by the expansion of student places and by the free market ideology of the present government which aims to create a market system of competition between universities. Theories of cultural relativism and the cultural incoherence of post-modernism have undermined the Arnoldian certainties of the 19th century [Scott 1984, Barnett 1990, p.10]. It must be seriously questioned whether the traditional values of an elite university system, in particular the disinterested pursuit of knowledge within a collegial community, have relevance to such a mass system of higher education in the post-modern era.

Some writers have argued for a very different idea of a university. R. Stankiewicz [1986: v. Tasker & Packham 1990] sees the 'ideal type' of university as one 'designed to function as an integrating factor in the larger R & D system' with the prime aim of 'technology generation and transfer'. Indeed Douglas Hague [1991] considers that universities will be only one among many 'knowledge businesses', taking the form of a 'holding company with all kinds of subsidiaries'.

In contrast a number of academic writers have accepted the challenge and have striven to adapt the traditional values of a liberal university education to present needs. These include the American political philosopher, Amy Gutmann [1987], who argues that universities must serve democracy by giving protection against the suppression of minority views, and by educating future leaders in a realm where intellectual integrity and the moral principles of tolerance, fairness and consideration for others flourish. Anthony O'Hear, Marjorie Reeves and Ronald Barnett, although writing with different emphases, are all concerned with the primacy of intellectual values in higher education in the post-modern context [O'Hear 1988; Reeves 1988; Barnett 1990].

Thus, in the shift to a mass system it is possible, and we would argue essential, to put at the forefront the traditional purposes of higher education, namely the creation of an educated public and the enhancing of a critical awareness [Gutmann 1987]. A liberal education , in the sense of one that frees the mind, is, ideally, as integral to a scientific and technological education as it is to an education in the arts and the humanities. It aims to educate students who can 'think autonomously , critically and dialogically' [McMurtry 1991] within an institution of higher learning that is committed to upholding standards of freedom and democracy, and to acting as a source of independent criticism within its areas of competence. A liberal university is one that is free to live out the traditional values of intellectual integrity and freedom of expression in teaching and research.

Government & Universities

We now examine some instances of direct Government intervention in higher education and argue that such interventions have served to promote 'industrial' values. Ever since it came to power in 1979, a frequently-stated aim of the Conservative government has been to increase the competitiveness of British industry. It sees higher education as playing an essential rôle in this process [White Paper 1987]. The government has directly intervened in teaching and learning, the heart of a university's activity.

Enterprise in Higher Education initiative.

During the 1980's the British government sought to revive the country's economy by fostering the 'enterprise culture'. Part of this strategy involved introducing 'enterprise education' into schools and, through the Training Agency's 'enterprise in higher education' initiative, into universities where it is still running. Grants are offered to those universities willing to bring 'enterprise skills' into all their courses. In the Training Agency's words, the initiative 'raises fundamental questions about the nature of the curriculum.... and about the culture and ethos of higher education' [Training Agency 1990, p. 4]. The kind of changes envisaged can be judged from the substantial rôle of employers in the key academic functions of 'curriculum delivery and assessment' [Training Agency 1989, p. 4]. A stated aim of the initiative is to influence the values of students so that they will 'have a positive attitude towards enterprise activity' [ibid. p. 5], and so help to supply 'the need for graduates who are in tune with the enterprise culture' [ibid. p. 5].

Academic supporters of the initiative have argued that it builds on old-established aspects of the academic tradition, enabling students to transform their

knowledge through action and to gain an understanding of the world of industry [Wright 1992, Bridges 1992]. Other writers have pointed to a lack of any critical examination of the concept of 'enterprise', and a neglect of the negative side of enterprise society - unemployment, recessions and gross inequalities of wealth and power [Coffield 1990, Bailey 1992].

Irrespective of how the initiative might work out in any particular university, it seems clear to us from the Training Agency's own documents that the intention of the government was to introduce the 'culture and ethos' of the market economy into universities. For Bailey, this amounts to indoctrination.

Academic 'audit' and assessment of teaching quality

In 1991 the academic 'audit' unit set up by the CVCP started work. In the Higher and Further Education Act of 1992 [FHEA], the government built on this and, for the first time in Britain, took powers to intervene directly in university teaching by setting up 'quality assessment' committees under its funding councils [FHEA 70(1); HEFCE 1992].

These developments have brought into universities the language of quality control, quality 'assurance', without serious debate as to their applicability. The jargon of the 'quality' audit jars, and a sense of misgiving arises because it symbolises, and may come to imply, a shift of culture and also of values of the kind that John McMurtry describes in North America: 'the language of educational purpose has undergone a sea-shift of transformation into business terminology' so that 'the educational process has been so pervasively subordinated to the aims and practices of business that its agents can no longer comprehend their vocation in any other terms' [McMurtry 1991].

Because teaching 'quality' is so nebulous a concept, the Government has wide scope in defining from time to time what it shall comprise. The White Paper which preceded the 1992 Act [White Paper 1991(b), ¥85] suggested that 'links with industry and commerce', 'the industrial and commercial relevance of provision' and 'access policies' could be part of 'quality', and therefore would be controlled via the purse strings [cf. White Paper 1991(b), ¦79]. Thus 'employer views are an element of growing importance in quality assurance and assessment' [Harvey 1993].

Thus we face the prospect of governmental direction of both the academic curriculum and admissions policies. A government which wanted to influence the values which informed the curriculum would have all the mechanisms required. It is interesting that as long ago as 1987, Barnett noted that 'current talk of "quality control" and "standards" may overlie deeper interests in political and social control of higher education' [Barnett 1987].

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